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FROM USMISSION TO UNESCO PARIS

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SUBJECT: UNESCO: ADG KHAN ON WORLD DIGITAL LIBRARY

¶1. (SBU) SUMMARY. John Van Oudenaren of the Library of Congress
(LOC) met with UNESCO Assistant Director-General for Communication
and Information Abdul Waheed Khan and staffer for Digital Libraries,
Abdelaziz Abid to discuss UNESCO's cooperation on the World Digital
Library (WDL). Khan, like other UNESCO staffers, pointed out how
work on the WDL fit in with the World Summit on the Information
Society (WSIS) action lines for which UNESCO has been named as a
potential facilitator.   Khan first raised the International
Federation of Library Associations and Institutions (ILFA)
conference that will take place in Seoul in August. Abid and Khan
suggested that UNESCO's session at the conference shift from being
solely about the WDL, as previously agreed between Abid and van
Oudenaren, to including many digital libraries. They then discussed
plans for a one-day WDL meeting that would take place at UNESCO in
December. Finally, it was agreed that they would try to launch WDL
at the 2007 General Conference (GC). END SUMMARY.

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UNESCO SESSION AT THE IFLA CONFERENCE IN SEOUL:
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¶2. (SBU) The first topic of discussion was the IFLA conference in
Seoul, at which UNESCO would have a two-hour session. In a previous
meeting Abid and Van Oudenaren agreed that the session would be
about UNESCO and the WDL, and that the speakers would be Van
Oudenaren, a UNESCO representative, and a representative of a
partner country of the WDL. Claudia Lux from IFLA would chair.
However, in the meeting with Khan, Abid suggested having a
representative from the EDL speak. Khan then suggested having a
representative from South Korea speak, as it is hosting the event.
Van Oudenaren said that was fine, but then the title of the session
would have to be changed from UNESCO and the WDL, as it would no
longer be focused solely on the WDL. Van Oudenaren stated that the
European Digital Library (EDL) is not comparable with the WDL.
(NOTE: The EDL is a mass digitization project, whereas the WDL is a
large-scale project to put rare and remote materials, particularly
from the developing world, into a digital library. The EDL is a

counterpart of, and was created in response to, Google Print. END
NOTE.) Van Oudenaren also added that the President of the French
National Library, Jean-Noel Jeanneney, who is spearheading the EDL,
would reject the idea of having the EDL presented as a part of, or
tied to, the WDL.

¶3. (SBU) Khan suggested having several digital libraries
represented at the session, and renaming it "Digital Library
Initiatives" and discussing how these initiatives linked to UNESCO's
post-World Summit on the Information Society (WSIS) role. Khan then
proposed that IFLA would pick a few digital library initiatives from
various regions to be represented at the Seoul session, so that
UNESCO was not in the position of choosing who would participate.
Van Oudenaren emphasized that in the session, UNESCO should focus on
articulating its goals and how it expected digital library projects
can contribute to these goals. Librarians tend to get sidetracked
into detailed discussions of standards. Standards are important for
WDL and other projects, but in this forum the focus should be on the
big picture, he stated.

¶4. (SBU) Following the two-hour UNESCO session in Seoul would be a
meeting of senior librarians. It was agreed that UNESCO would brief
the high-level meeting on the outcome of the two-hour "Digital
Library Initiatives" session.

DECEMBER WDL MEETING AT UNESCO:

¶5. (SBU) The discussion then turned to holding a December WDL
"experts' meeting," at UNESCO headquarters. Abid said the meting
would involve between 30 and 35 people, maybe more, while Khan
emphasized the need for a focused meeting and stated that there
should be no more than 30 people. UNESCO expressed strong interest
in having a mockup of the WDL site available at the December meeting
in order to get a better understanding of the project. Van Oudenaren
said that this would be possible. He added that the title "experts
meeting" was a misnomer, as the LOC would like to invite librarians
of the six Global Gateway Sites (GGS) and IFLA members. Khan said
the private sector, including Google, Microsoft, and Melinda Gates,
should be involved to this meeting. He added that the Europeans
(meaning Jeanneney) should also be invited as a courtesy. Van
Oudenaren responded that Jeanneney strongly dislikes Google, and
that the private sector should be invited to the launch when there
is a product that they can consider supporting through private
donations, instead of to the December meeting.

¶6. (SBU) Khan and van Oudenaren agreed that the December meeting
would take place over one day. Van Oudenaren mentioned the LOC's
draft agenda for a meeting focused on four issues: Architecture
(including multilingualism), Selection, Governance, and Financing.
Khan said that a one-day meeting would present a challenge of time,
and he would like to see advance work done in order to ensure a
focused, results-oriented meeting that established working groups.
Van Oudenaren suggested that UNESCO could provide the wrap-up of the
meeting with its perspective on the WDL.

LAUNCH OF WDL IN OCTOBER 2007:

¶7. (SBU) Abid turned the discussion to the launch of the WDL,
saying that the DG was in favor of a formal launch after the
December meeting. Abid suggested organizing a high-level event with
several heads of state to raise funds for the WDL. He noted that
this kind of event had been a success when 20 Arab heads of state
had gotten together to raise money for the Bibliotheca Alexandrina.
Van Oudenaren objected to the idea of an early launch date, saying
the LOC did not want to launch something that was still an "empty
shell." Van Oudenaren and Khan also agreed that there would be a
functioning multilingual site at the launch. Khan agreed with Van
Oudenaren, stating the October 2007 UNESCO General Conference would
be a better place for the launch, as many heads of state and
ministers would already be present, and it would leave 18 months to
develop the WDL project. Van Oudenaren added that Google's Sergei
Brin and other private sector representatives could be invited to
the GC for the launch, and Khan proposed creating a Kiosk modeled on
the UNESCO kiosk at WSIS in Tunis last November in order to generate

private sector interest.

¶8. (SBU) COMMENT: The meeting with Khan was helpful in the sense
that it brought a focused timeline of cooperation (IFLA Conference,
Experts meeting at UNESCO HQ in December 2006, followed by a formal
launch in October 2007, perhaps with a technology savvy display
modeled on the UNESCO Kiosk at WSIS in Tunis.) However, the meeting
also showed that Aziz, though enthusiastic about the project in
principle, was not willing to defend the original plan for UNESCO
and the WDL to share the floor at IFLA. Van Oudenaren had to
explain yet again that the WDL is different from the EDL, and
finally, while Khan is keen to attract private sector investment to
UNESCO and to the project, Aziz's instinct - like many UNESCO
staffers - is to raise public funds. END COMMENT.

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